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Race and Society in the Andean Countries

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RACE AND SOCIETY IN THE ANDEAN COUNTRIES[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The countries in which the readers of The Hispanic American Historical Review are especially interested are distinguished by the presence of sociological and cultural problems which are directly caused by the racial constitution of their populations. In some of the lands in question the race problems concern but two races, usually the white race and the indigenes; but in others as many as four racial elements combine to create a sociological situation of the highest complexity. Until the last three or four years almost nothing has been done, either in Hispanic America or in Anglo-Saxon America, to bring out the present-day potentialities for modern civilization which are indubitably latent in the indigenes of Latin America and in that portion of the population which is derived both from them and from the white, black, or yellow intrusive elements.

Though my purpose here is to present a picture of the racial and social situation as I have observed it in the Andean countries (Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia), I can not do so without first dwelling briefly on the work of a well-known Mexican investigator along these lines.

Manuel Gamio, director of the *Dirección de Estudios Arqueológicos y Etnográficos* (part of the Secretaría de Fomento, Mexico City), is the founder, in Mexico, of race-appreciation, the study which aims to learn what former and present cultural, intellectual, and spiritual characteristics of the indigenes of America are capable of being woven into the fabric of modern civilization. Race-appreciation seeks to understand the geographical characteristics and problems of the land and to com-

[1] This study by Mr. Means is of primary interest from the anthropological side, but it is given place here as being of value to historians and general students of Hispanic America.—Ed.

prehend the psychology and requirements of each racial group to the end that every step may be taken by society to overcome every environmental drawback to cultural development and to bring to the highest possible level of excellence every portion of the population. In a word, race-appreciation seeks to make society strong with a strength which is the unified strength of every ethnic group in the nation.

The means which Gamio purposes to employ in this matter are these:

(1) The acquisition of data referring to the racial characteristics, the manifestations of material and intellectual culture, the languages and dialects, the economic situation and the effects of the physical and biological environment of the past and present regional populations of the Republic [of Mexico]. (2) An investigation into the methods for improving the present economic, physical, and intellectual development of the said populations. (3) The preparation for a drawing-together of races, for a cultural fusion and a linguistic unification, and for the economic stability of the said groups of the population which, only by these means, will be able to form a coherent nationality and a true nation.[2]

The need of race-appreciation is by no means limited to Mexico. As Gamio has pointed out in many places, most of the Hispanic American countries suffer sorely from its lack. Indeed, one may safely say that any country which has one well-developed native element and one or more well-developed intrusive elements in its population requires race-appreciation.

After thus reminding my reader of the work which is already under way to introduce race-appreciation where it is needed, I shall present a short description of the racial situation in the Andean countries. Only by examining the question with as great care as possible in representative regions can its importance be comprehended.

[2] Translated from the *Programa de la dirección de estudios arqueológicos y etnográficos*, by Manuel Gamio (Mexico, 1918), pp. 16–17.

Sr. Gamio has been at work on the question of race-appreciation several years. I venture to call attention to his book *Forjando Patria* (Mexico, 1916) and to his papers read before the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress (Washington, 1915). In these works the reader will find a very full and clear exposition of the principles of race-appreciation as it concerns Mexico.

CHP
Author
1919

II. RACIAL CLASSES IN THE ANDES

Society in the Andean countries falls into three grand racial categories: Indigenous, Intrusive, and Mix-bloods. For the purposes of this short paper I shall assume that the Whites are the only intrusives and that the Mestizos (cross of indigene and white) are the only mix-bloods. The Negroes, Orientals, and the various mixtures arising from them and the other elements are not of the first importance.

Although reliable figures are practically non-existent in the Andes it is quite safe to assume that at least fifty percent of the population in the Andean countries is made up of almost pure-blooded indigenes. These people are the direct descendants, both in flesh and in culture, of the people who held undisputed sway in the land up to about 1530. To understand those of today, the indigenes of the past must be studied. In the pre-Conquest period the Andes were the seat of a group of civilizations of extraordinary interest. In the highlands there were two great periods of civilization, one being the Colla (or Aymará) empire which had its center at Tiahuanaco near the southern end of Lake Titicaca. It flourished probably between about 400 A.D. and about 1000 A.D. Then, about 1100 A.D., the Inca tribe of Cuzco began to form a hegemony over the surrounding tribes of Quichua-speaking folk and finally, in the fourteenth century, it created the second great empire in the highlands. On the coast culture was more steady and continuous. The first settlers came unquestionably from Central America. There were many valleys which traversed (and still traverse) the absolutely desert coast-lands. Each of them was the seat of a society, usually of high material culture. As time wore on, these societies tended to merge together. Large confederations, such as that of the Chimu in the North and that of the Chincha or that of Nasca in the South, were formed. Social development was very remarkable. From time to time the mountain cultures, whether that of the Colla (Tiahuanaco) empire or that of the Inca empire, exercised very profound influence over the civilization of the littoral. In the case of the

Inca empire, at least, that influence amounted to political control.

Taken as a whole these pre-Conquest cultures of the Andean countries present several features of high excellence. The coast people had a skill and cleverness in handicrafts which enabled them to produce not only very fine pottery, brilliant in color and varied in form, but also cotton and woolen fabrics equal in quality to those made anywhere at any time. In the working of gold, silver, copper, stone, and bone they were adepts. The buildings and cities constructed by them were made of adobe (sun-dried mud and clay), but they were enormous in size and very well planned. The system of irrigation used on the coast was as efficacious, if not so pretentious, as that now in use. Social organization was characterized by a general orderliness and efficiency. In the highlands, save at Tiahuanaco, Cuzco, Quito, and similar seats of the aristocracy, culture was of a somewhat lower degree of development. Even so, however, the mountaineers were able to build many hundreds of miles of wonderful *andenes* or masonry terraces for agricultural purposes. They adopted this means of increasing the arable area of their narrow valleys, showing therein a sagacity and resourcefulness which commands respect. The architecture of the chief places (such as Cuzco, Ollantaytambo, Pisac, Huata, Machu Pichu, Cañar, and Huánuco) was excellent, fine stone buildings of superb ashlar masonry in various styles being erected. Besides this, there were remarkable paths for the movement of troops and travelers. The government of the Incas was extraordinary. Not only did the state control all the activities of all the people, but also it saw to it that none lacked for anything which he needed. It was a perfect and very benevolent aristocratic socialism. The court of the Sapa Inca (sovereign) was marked by a high degree of splendor. Finely woven hangings, exquisitely designed vessels of pottery, objects of gold, silver, bronze, copper, wood, and stone all combined to give an atmosphere of luxury and pomp to the life of the ruler and of the royal family. All the provinces of the empire (which was nearly 3,000 miles in length at the time of the Conquest)

sent as tribute to the court their most excellent products. There is plenty of evidence to show that the development, both material and intellectual, of the people of all classes in the Inca empire was almost equal to that which had characterized the analogous classes in Spain two or three centuries before the Conquest.

From these remarkable people are descended the indigenes of the Andean countries of today. In the Conquest and Colonial periods they underwent all manner of abuse and misjudgment as to their qualities. I am very far from denying that there were good features in the Spanish Colonial Government; still further am I from denying that the Spanish crown sincerely sought to safeguard the best interests of its new subjects, the native peoples of the New World. Nevertheless, the Spaniards, instead of benefiting the indigenes, well nigh destroyed their wonderful civilization and greatly reduced their numbers. It is not my purpose here to go into the discussion of this matter deeply. I will simply state that, in my opinion the fundamental reason why contact with Spain proved harmful to the natives of the Andes was that the Spanish government took no sympathetic cognizance of the native institutions and failed to construct its administrative machinery in such a way as to incorporate the remarkable governmental system to which the people were almost automatically obedient. When Spain sought to erect an European government over a people who were not European she was doomed to fail.

Although for nearly four centuries the Andean indigenes have been subjected to the deteriorating effects of such a government, it is extraordinary how much of their own ancient organization still survives. I have studied these survivals both on the coast and in the highlands. Underlying the hierarchy of officials who form parts of the national governments of the Andean countries, governments patterned closely on that of the French Republic, is another hierarchy which is entirely unofficial and unrecognized, but which is nevertheless powerful. I refer to the so-called *gobernación menor*. As I shall make clear presently, the Andean countries are largely divided up into great landed estates. The

gobernación menor is that by which the head of one of these estates or, in those regions where the general rule of large estates is broken, the *gobernador* of the district, rules over the Indians and laborers in general within his jurisdiction. At the head of the *gobernación menor* stands the *hacendado* (owner of the estate or *hacienda*). Often several thousand people are directly subject to his will on one estate, and a rich *hacendado* sometimes will own half a dozen or more large estates. To administer them he (or his steward) acts through a series of native officers called *curacas*. They, in turn, have other officers under them. Each village has its *curaca* and its *alguaciles*. All are Indians, and all are direct survivals of the old Inca system of administration. The potentialities latent in this *gobernación menor*, potentialities which might be developed in such a way as to better immensely the government of the Andean countries, should be carefully treated according to the principles of race-appreciation.

As regards the present conditions under which the Indians live, there is a sharp contrast between the coast and the mountains. On the littoral, because of the proximity to the outside world, the presence of very active and highly organized trade, a general enlightenment and progressiveness on the part of the upper class, and one of the finest climates in the world, their condition is by no means wretched, as compared, that is, with the condition of the highlanders. On the coast the people of the indigenous race do not suffer so much from deliberate malignance on the part of their superiors (of which there is very little) as they do from total neglect and from the *laisser aller* attitude of the latter. Except in the cases of such rare exceptions as the estates of Don Victor Larco Herrera and of Don Antonio Graña y Reyes, almost nothing has been done to improve their living conditions or to intensify their vitality by means of sports and wholesome pastimes. A change is coming, however, for a new spirit of interest in the humble is beginning to make itself felt in the upper class. This change is already seen, on the coast, in the care with which the regulations to prevent drunkenness are upheld in many places. It will not be long before great improvements are made in all directions.

In the mountains, on the other hand, the depressing environment of a cold, rocky and difficult land to till combines with a general inferiority on the part of the *hacendados* and with a general prevalence of alcoholism, filth, disease, and debauchery to produce conditions which are exceedingly bad. It is not fair, however, to blame the people of the mountains for their degradation. Their lot is a hard one; added to that, the almost total absence (in remoter valleys quite total) of stimulating contact with the outside world and its ideals and of wholesome amusements, causes life to assume a dun-colored hue and an atmosphere of hopelessness and joylessness which fully accounts for all the evil which prevails. Little by little, even in the highland valleys, conditions are improving. Railways, the telegraph, the telephone, the cinema, the printing-press, and mechanical musical instruments are beginning to make life distinctly more bearable, to help men to shake off sloth and bestiality and become vigorous and alert. The difference in moral tone between two highland villages which I know is simply astounding. They are not as much as six miles apart. In one, because the *hacendado* and his brother the priest are indifferent to the welfare of their charges, conditions of all sorts are horrible. In the other, the *hacendado* has installed a young priest from France, and the two work hand in hand for the people. They have games and races for them on Sundays and holidays and in the evenings there is always a fine cinema or a reading of interesting stories by the priest or some similar amusement which is open to all. The dwellings, too, though far from being what they should be, are much better than those in the other village. The people are stronger, longer-lived, more jolly, and self-respecting, and much more productive as regards work in the fields.

The *mestizo* class forms about thirty to thirty-five percent of the population. The chief difference, in the mountains, between them and the Indians is that they wear garments suggestive of those of Europe, whereas the indigenes keep their ancient costume. The *mestizos* also habitually speak Spanish, not Quichua or Colla. On the coast, the line between them as a rule is much

fainter, in both particulars, for there is now almost no trace either of the ancient dress or of the native tongues on the coast. As a matter of fact, it is exceedingly difficult to find an absolutely pure-blooded indigene on the coast. In the colonial period (and even in more modern times) the practice of concubinage was very general, as it was in the South of this country before the Civil War, and so the number of *mestizos* was very great. It should be added that the practice is now looked upon with general disgust by the *hacendado* class of the littoral. In general it may be said that the *mestizo* class is that which furnishes the stewards of the great estates, the shop-keepers, the small merchants, most of the lower clergy, the minor lawyers, the clerks and the servants who are in direct personal attendance upon the *hacendado* and his family. This statement, however, is made subject to the exceptions to be noted presently.

The pure or nearly pure white class (strongest on the coast) is practically all in the land-holding aristocracy or in the upper ranks of the commercial and professional worlds. They are like white people anywhere else.

III. SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE ANDES

Most writers, realizing the existence of the three great racial classes, have assumed that they are conterminous with the three chief social classes—laborers and peasants, middle class, and upper class. Unfortunately this is only true in a measure. Although most whites are in the upper class it is by no means rarely that one finds them in the other two classes as well. Similarly, one quite frequently finds almost pure-blooded or really pure-blooded Indians in the highest society. The middle class, however, is almost wholly made up of mix-blooded people.

Andean society, using that unfortunate word in its newspaper sense, is delightful. Families whose wealth or position is due to their great landed properties, to their aristocratic descent or to their intermarriage with such families combine with other families whose heads are important lawyers, doctors, or educa-

tors, or are influential in the business world to create a social life of great attractiveness on account of the multiplicity of interests. Lima, La Paz, Sucre, Quito, and other cities all have such a group of families. The genuine hospitality and the lively intellectual interest of such people make them not only charming companions but also sincere friends. It is a pleasure to note that, on the littoral at least, their old faults of absenteeism and indifference to the welfare of their dependents is gradually wearing away. Before long the same thing will be true of the highlands as well. Many land-holding families no longer dwell exclusively in their handsomely appointed (in some cases really palatial) city houses. More and more it is becoming the custom to live for a large part of the year on the *hacienda*. As a result, some of the country houses now being built equal in taste and charm and luxury those of North America or England. This tendency, coupled with an increasing fondness for sports and for automobiling, is one of the most hopeful signs I know of in the Andes.

There is no need for me to add anything to what I have already said incidentally regarding the middle and lower classes.

IV. THE REQUIREMENTS OF ANDEAN SOCIETY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Having pointed out in general terms the present racial and social characteristics of Andean society, I would like, before concluding this brief paper, to point out what seem to me to be the pressing needs of the Andean countries and their people. To my mind there is no doubt but that those countries might, under a carefully directed policy of race-appreciation, be brought to a very high level of development and might be given a place in the commerce and international politics of the world far higher than that now held by some more pretentious but really less admirable nations. A great deal will have to be done by the Andeans, however, before that position is attained.

In the first place, every precaution must be taken by them to prevent the growing up among them of that destructive and

corrosive tendency which is so strong in Europe and North America. I refer to the leveling and disruptive variety of democracy. If any of the so-called "advanced" doctrines of Bolshevikism and syndicalism take root in the Andes, the danger to true and lasting progress will be tremendous. Instead of a destructive variety of democracy what the Andeans need is, first of all, a general improvement in the physique, mentality, morals, and standards of all classes. This applies especially, of course, to the lower class. To bring about such an amelioration race-appreciation must be resorted to. By that I mean just this: *Hacendados* and other persons in a responsible position should introduce new types of dwellings for the peasantry of their estates. The best way to do this would be to study the ancient architecture of the indigenes, amply represented in the designs on their pottery, and erect villages of houses made of good adobe, or still better, of concrete, patterned after the excellent ones in use before the Conquest. Cleanliness should be encouraged by every possible method, by swimming-tanks in the neighborhood of the villages, or by swimming-places in the rivers or in the sea. Good amusements should be made easily accessible, community games, dances, and singing being especially emphasized. The peculiar skill of the people in all manner of handicraft, weaving, metal-working, wood-carving, pottery, and so on, should be studied. Efforts should be made to increase agriculture, both in the direction of increased tillage and in that of new varieties of crops (such as silk, flax, and fine fruits). Any *hacendado* who studied his property and the people on it with such improvements in mind would quickly find a score of salutary changes which could easily and economically be introduced.

The responsibility which rests upon the *hacendado* class is, therefore, tremendous. On them depends the creation, both on the shore and in the highlands, of a wholesome and intelligent peasantry which alone can form the foundation for a progressive and stable society.

The middle class, also, should seek to improve itself. The general disregard of even the essentials of personal hygiene must

cease. The filth and squalor in which persons of this class who are by no means poor are content to live is not merely a disgrace, but is also an actual menace to society as a whole. Cleanliness and neatness must replace foulness and slatternliness if this class and the peasantry wish to see their country take its place among the modern-minded nations of the world.

In a word, all that the Andean countries need is a general introspective examination of the qualities both good and bad that now mark all classes. That finished, they should seek to nullify the bad by strengthening the good tendencies. The best features of each of the two great cultures represented, the indigene and the white, should be blended together to form a new fabric which shall make a suitable social and material garment for a nation with a compound population. The solid foundation required by true democracy will then have been prepared, and the people will have acquired that poise and sanity of judgment which is the surest defense against Bolshevikism and kindred evils.

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